CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.895
28 February 2002

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 28 February 2002, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Fisseha Yimer (Ethiopia)

GE.02-60986 (E) 220302 040402

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 895th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset I should like to extend our welcome to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, who is with us today. His presence at our plenary meeting is evidence of his enduring interest in the work of the Conference as well as of his continuous support to our efforts in the field of arms limitation and disarmament.

I have the following speakers on my list for today: Ambassador Heinsberg of Germany, Ambassador Sanders of the Netherlands, Ambassador Johansen of Norway, Ambassador Lint of Belgium, Ambassador Westdal of Canada and Mr. Sugondhabhirom of Thailand.

Following their statements, I will also give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky.

Once we have heard all the speakers, I intend to proceed to the appointment - the stage which we have now reached in this matter - of the officers to fill the posts of special coordinators established in decision CD/1667, taken by the Conference at its 893rd plenary meeting on 14 February 2002.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Volker Heinsberg.

Mr. HEINSBERG (Germany): Mr. President, being new to the Conference on Disarmament and taking the floor here for the first time, allow me to extend to you my best wishes for the important and demanding task you have assumed as President of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation. I would also like to thank all colleagues and friends in the Conference for the warm welcome that they have extended to me in this body. Allow me also to extend my greetings to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Dhanapala, to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Petrovsky, to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Román-Morey, and to the members of the secretariat. I include in my greetings our interpreters, whom I thank one and all for the task that they are doing.

In the aftermath of the horrible attacks of 11 September 2001, we all agreed on the United Nations resolution on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism. In this resolution we all reaffirmed that multilateralism is the core principle of negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, leading to the strengthening of universal norms and the widening of their scope. We all emphasized that progress is urgently needed in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to help maintain international peace and security and to contribute to global efforts against terrorism. All of us further agreed to call upon all Member States to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and achieving their common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Mr. President, it is time to implement these commitments here and now in the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Heinsberg, Germany)

I have to express my deep concern about the current state of the Conference on Disarmament, which normally is characterized politely as a "stalemate" or "impasse". In going through the records of the Conference's plenary meetings since 1999 and listening to recent statements here, I also came across some more drastic expressions. Indeed, Mr. President, the situation in the Conference on Disarmament does not look very promising.

Since 1999 the Conference has been unable effectively to launch any substantive work. In document CD/1036, entitled "Decision on the improvement and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament", the members agreed that, at the beginning of its annual session, "the Conference, shall establish its programme of work". As in previous years, however, the first four weeks of this year's annual session - and now even more - have already passed, without a work programme being in sight.

This important body was established by the General Assembly at its tenth special session to be the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. The Conference on Disarmament has a track record of many multilateral agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation. This forum has shown that it is capable of producing specific arms control and disarmament agreements when the member States have the political will.

We have to live up to our responsibility and perform the real task for which we were established. Let us use the plenary of this Conference for a far-reaching exchange of views on the relevant issues on our agenda with a view to overcoming the present impasse and to underscoring the importance of this eminent international body.

The German Government supports all efforts to strengthen and develop further the multilateral instruments of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, so that they continue to meet the challenges of a changing security environment. Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation are essential elements in our endeavours to establish a new cooperative security order for the twenty-first century.

The process of nuclear disarmament must be further strengthened and resolutely advanced. Accordingly, Germany continues to attach the utmost importance to the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material (FMCT). In this context, I would like to recall that the NPT-member States, in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, agreed on the necessity of the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Germany is also concerned about the prospects of an arms race in outer space. We therefore, attach high importance to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, without delay, and the commencement of substantial work on the issue. But we do think that every issue should be dealt with independently. We agree with the position put forward by our Russian colleague in support of the re-establishment of the ad hoc committee on FMCT with a negotiating mandate - without linkages to other issues.

Successive presidents of the Conference on Disarmament have made tremendous efforts to bring about an agreement on a work programme. The proposal of the Brazilian presidency,

(Mr. Heinsberg, Germany)

the "Amorim proposal", put forward in August 2000, contains the essence of these efforts. The German delegation fully shares the assessment of our British colleague that, since August 2000, nothing better than the Amorim proposal has come along, nor does it look likely to. As has been eloquently pointed out by our Japanese colleague, the Amorim proposal contains the necessary degree of flexibility to allow every delegation in the Conference on Disarmament to see its position safeguarded.

Why then, can we not move beyond the formula: "as a basis for consultation?" By repeating it over and over for more than one year without any substantial result, this has become an empty shell. I suggest making a serious effort to reach consensus on a work programme on the basis of the Amorim proposal. If we succeed, we can engage in a working process on a number of important items on the international agenda for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation:

- Nuclear disarmament;
- Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- Prevention of an arms race in outer space;
- Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- Questions related to anti-personnel landmines;
- Transparency in armaments.

That would bring the Conference back to its raison d'être and respond to the call expressed in the United Nations consensus resolution on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism.

Mr. President, it is often stated that the adoption of a substantive work programme for the Conference on Disarmament could be possible if good will and flexibility prevailed. Germany considers it the responsibility of all - and I repeat - of all member States of the Conference on Disarmament to make use of this body in order to advance the cause of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, especially at this critical juncture. We should not allow future generations to relegate us to a mere historical footnote, because we did not live up to the challenges of our time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Chris Sanders.

Mr. SANDERS (Netherlands): Mr. President, when I entered this room this morning, for the first time I noted the sun is shining. Normally, the curtains behind you are closed, but this morning the sun is shining into this room, and I am in it, and I hope it is a very good sign for our work.

Mr. President, I would like to extend to you my congratulations and best wishes on your appointment as President of this Conference and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in seeking progress in the work of the Conference this year. I should also like to thank the secretariat for its invaluable support to the work of this Conference.

Last but not least - and I saw he came in right at this moment - I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General of this Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who is with us today for the last time before he leaves Geneva. His presence in this body, as well as his continuous support for substantive work in the Conference, has been of invaluable support to the Conference. It has been a pleasure for myself and for my delegation to work with him. I look back to a wealth of good memories on our cooperation with Mr. Petrovsky in this body and outside this room. May I convey through you, Mr. President, our best wishes to Mr. Petrovsky for the future, both professionally as well as personally.

Mr. President, tomorrow is the third anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. This treaty has been of extreme importance and has over the past years made good progress in this very important cause, which has the full support of my Government. I fully associate myself with others who are going to speak on this issue and will address the Conference accordingly.

As most of you will be aware, the Netherlands is a member of the European Union and fully shares the common foreign and security policy of the Union. Some time ago our Spanish colleague, Ambassador Carlos Miranda, spoke on behalf of the Union, and it is not my intention to repeat what he said.

Individual members of the European Union do have their own priorities, which are of course fully compatible with the Union's common positions, but which tell you something from their national perspective. The European Union's common positions are like a rich menu to which every member of the Union has contributed some of its national flavour. I do not want to exaggerate the quality of Dutch cuisine, but still we think it is worthwhile to tell you about some of the specific ingredients that we have added to this menu.

First of all, I would like to point out the historical role that the Netherlands has played in the development of international law. In the short term, countries may see advantages in being eclectic in their approach to the law of nations. Where it would serve their immediate interests, they would like to avail themselves of legally binding treaties, in other cases they would prefer other approaches.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

In our view, we should continue to stress the importance and viability of the sustained long-term approach focused on the multilateral architecture. This is not to say that urgent short-term objectives should not be pursued, but that should not be to the detriment of the long-term goal of creating an international legal framework that will govern our behaviour in the field of security and disarmament. Some of our negotiations might be delayed, but as a matter of principle we are committed to the multilateral track and do not wish to see its existence questioned.

Regrettably, last year was not a very propitious one for multilateral disarmament. I will not dwell upon this, as the position of the European Union on the value of multilateral disarmament in general and the implementation and strengthening of the various regimes is well known. For us in the Conference on Disarmament, it is important to find agreement on what the Conference's share of the multilateral agenda can be. The Netherlands fully supports the Amorim package, which is balanced and gives every member of the Conference its share of the multilateral pie. But I would like to draw your attention to two cherries on the Conference's agenda, which traditionally have been very much to our liking: first, a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) and, second, the subject of transparency in armaments.

Negotiations on an FMCT are long overdue. We are all very much aware of the reasons - or rather, the causes - which inhibit the early commencement of these negotiations. I will not go into these problems now, although I personally find it quite astonishing that, at a time when there is so much talk about the value of multilateralism, apparently the only multilateral negotiations which we all agree upon cannot start for those reasons. Anyway, it is our conviction that, as long as this situation persists, we should find alternative means of promoting the cause of an FMCT.

Accordingly, about one year ago, we initiated broad and open-ended consultations on a process that could prepare the ground for FMCT negotiations within this Conference. The purpose of this process or exercise is that, once the political conditions allow for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, part of the homework will already have been done and by that time we will be able to make progress in the Conference more expeditiously than would otherwise have been the case. Now our children hate to do homework, but nevertheless we know we must convince them that they should do it. I am confident that, when our children grow up, they will agree with us that this homework was indeed necessary. And I am sure that all of you will agree about that with me as well - at least I hope so.

I will therefore continue the process that we started last year. We were grateful for the two seminars that were organized by Germany, and by Japan and Australia. They provided an excellent opportunity for a substantive debate on core issues of an FMCT. But we would like to put this work on a more structured and systematic footing. I will consult with you on how to do this. We will keep the process alive, and I hope I can count on your support in the coming year.

On a separate note, I would like to draw your attention to another way in which the cause of FMCT could be further promoted. We would like to explore the idea of an appeal to relevant members of the Conference on Disarmament to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material and to take transparency measures related to production and stocks, pending the

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

conclusion of a treaty on the prohibition of production of fissile material. Such a step would undoubtedly be conducive to preparing the ground for expedient negotiations and would, in its own right, be a useful interim contribution to nuclear non-proliferation.

This brings me to the second part of my statement, which is on transparency in armaments. Transparency, as most of you may know, is very close to the hearts of the Dutch. Whether it comes to politics or business, the Dutch like openness. We live in a flat country and we do not close our curtains at night - at least not in the living room. In the sleeping rooms I think we do close them. We always try to be as transparent as possible.

Transparency in armaments is one of the major confidence-building principles among States, which enables the international community to be better informed about military matters and developments. Transparency in armaments thus diminishes misperceptions and helps obviate the distortion of information.

The desirability of transparency applies as much to weapons of mass destruction as it does to conventional weapons.

Let me first talk on the transparency of conventional arms. Two important instruments are at hand here: the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the system for standardized reporting on military matters, including transparency in military expenditures. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has become reasonably well established over the past 10 years. It has established a de facto norm of transparency. It provides a significant and ever increasing amount of information officially reported by Governments, which otherwise would not have been available. The Register also has prompted many Governments to improve their national systems for monitoring and controlling the transfer of conventional arms. Finally, the Register has set an example for regional initiatives, such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. In order to boost participation in the Register even further, I am very pleased to announce that the Netherlands, together with Canada, Germany, Japan and the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, is planning to organize a number of regional seminars in Africa and Latin America to promote understanding and knowledge of the Register.

Standardized reporting on military matters and transparency in military expenditures are also important in building confidence among States, thereby enhancing international peace and security. Reporting on holdings and transfers of conventional arms has become an accepted phenomenon, whether it is on large calibre conventional arms, on small arms and light weapons or on landmines.

The Netherlands, as I have said, also attaches particular importance to transparency in the field of weapons of mass destruction. This applies equally to the Biological Weapons Convention, where the Netherlands has always strongly advocated randomly selected transparency visits, the international monitoring system of CTBT, the inspection regime of OPCW and the additional safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

The Netherlands is a staunch advocate of increasing transparency with regard to nuclear arsenals. At the NPT Review Conference held two years ago, we put forward some proposals in this respect, together with Belgium, Germany, Italy and Norway. The NPT 2000 Final Document calls for increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to article VI and as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament. According to our original proposal at the Review Conference, such measures could include a commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to provide periodically the aggregate numbers of warheads, delivery systems and stocks of fissile material for military purposes in their possession and their nuclear policies. Furthermore, we would like to see greater accountability. We think that the nuclear-weapon States should give a commitment to provide periodically, within the framework of the strengthened review process, a written account of the progress achieved towards the implementation of article VI of the NPT and paragraph 4 (c) of the 1995 Principles and Objectives. We would also welcome the reduction of warheads and non-strategic nuclear weapons in a transparent and irreversible way. Increased transparency with regard to tactical or non-strategic nuclear weapons could be a first step and would be an important confidence-building measure.

I would like to commend those nuclear-weapons States that already allow for a good degree of transparency. It is my sincere hope that these States will further their efforts to be transparent about their nuclear arsenals. I would like to call on the other relevant States, that possess nuclear weapons, also to become transparent with regard to their nuclear arsenals.

But transparency on nuclear issues not only applies to the "haves"; it also applies to the "have-nots". Concluding additional safeguards with the IAEA is another important way of being transparent. We urge all those States that have not yet signed or ratified such an additional protocol to do so without delay.

Transparency in armaments is one of the so-called non-contested items on the agenda of this Conference. We see no reason whatsoever standing in the way of dealing with this issue in the Conference on Disarmament. I hope what I have just said on this issue demonstrates that we are ready to discuss it with others in this Conference. Right now if you wish.

Outside the realm of the Conference on Disarmament, there are two other issues that my country seeks to promote, because they concern fairly recent developments which have a significant impact on our security.

The first is that of explosive remnants of war in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This is not a matter for the Conference on Disarmament as such, and it is not arms control in the strict sense, but part of international humanitarian law. In the midst of more gloomy developments in other multilateral negotiations over the last year it has emerged as one of the more hopeful items for real progress, an early spring flower in a winter landscape. At last year's review conference of the CCW, under the able leadership of Ambassador Les Luck, I was appointed to coordinate this subject under the new president

(Mr. Sanders, Netherlands)

designate for the CCW, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India. We are determined to carry this process forward as efficiently as we can. Humanitarian suffering is something we need to prevent as much as we can. Civic societies have taken a strong interest, and we must respond to their pleas.

Second, the proliferation of ballistic missiles and missile technology poses a severe threat to our security, because this proliferation is directly related to weapons of mass destruction. The Netherlands is actively supporting work towards a politically binding international code of conduct against missile proliferation. We hope that the code will be finalized and adopted soon, possibly even in 2002. This would be a significant achievement. Some weeks ago, a meeting was held in Paris to discuss the issue. That meeting was attended by more than 80 countries, clear testimony to the urgency of the issue of the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

This Conference has now been deadlocked for about six years, with the minor exception of two weeks of substantive work in 1998. Collectively we have denied ourselves the opportunity to discuss the issues at stake for a number of years now. How long can we let this situation continue while so many important issues need to be dealt with right away? The proposal of Ambassador Amorim may perhaps not be perfectly satisfactory, but it is the best opportunity we have before us. As I have already said, it probably reflects, to the best possible extent, the interests of all member States of this Conference while not compromising any national positions in terms of substance.

Therefore, Mr. President, my delegation is ready to begin substantive work right now.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, Ambassador Sverre Bergh Johansen.

Mr. JOHANSEN (Norway): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor during your presidency, allow me to congratulate you upon assuming this important function. My delegation looks forward to working with you.

I am taking the floor on the occasion of the third anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Norway attaches great importance to this Convention, which was negotiated in Oslo and subsequently signed in Ottawa about four years ago. The very short time span between the signing ceremony and entry into force clearly illustrates that the international community saw a clear need for a total ban on anti-personnel mines.

Over the last three years the Convention has proved its added value. There has been a significant reduction in the use of anti-personnel mines and a dramatic drop in the production of these mines. There is an almost complete halt in trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines. The

(Mr. Johansen, Norway)

destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines is moving well ahead. There is increased funding for humanitarian mine action, including victim assistance, and mostly importantly, we are now seeing a notable decline in the number of new mine victims.

This clearly illustrates that the Mine Ban Convention is becoming an international norm, which is working beyond the membership of the Convention.

An increasing number of countries therefore see the relevance of the Convention. There are today 122 States parties to the Convention. We expect the number of States parties to rise beyond 130 by the Fourth Meeting of States parties in September this year. At the United Nations General Assembly last year, 122 countries co-sponsored the resolution supporting the Convention. No other resolution in the First Committee could match that.

In addition, the Ottawa process represents a unique partnership between mine-affected and other countries, between North and South, and between Governments and non-governmental organizations. The process continues to be a constructive, cooperative undertaking that supports a multilateral approach. In that respect we have noticed that several members of the Conference on Disarmament have cited the Mine Ban Convention as an example of a multilateral process which is yielding positive results.

Although considerable progress has been made since the entry into force of the Convention, we are still facing challenges. Anti-personnel mines are still being used in too many conflicts. Societies emerging from war and violence will continue to be plagued by mines. There will be thousands of new victims in the months and years ahead.

Mines are often deployed in the most fertile soil. Anti-personnel mines do not only represent a humanitarian emergency, but also a threat to reconstruction and development. Today, there is much international attention given to the mine challenges in Afghanistan. This is most pertinent. We must not forget, however, that other war-torn countries need international mine action support as well.

Norway intends to respond to such needs. To this end we adhere to our commitment to allocate 120 million United States dollars to mine action over a five-year period. We urge other donor countries to continue - and even to increase - their funding for humanitarian mine action.

There is clearly a need for the Mine Ban Convention. Over the last years, different measures have been taken to improve its functioning. The establishment of the Coordination Committee, and more recently the Implementation Support Unit within the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, underscore our collective will to promote the Convention and its objectives still further.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translation from French): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on taking over the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You may count on the full cooperation of my delegation in performing your functions. I would also like to say that it is always a pleasure for me to see Mr. Petrovsky and Mr. Dhanapala among us.

As my Netherlands and Norwegian colleagues have said, 1 March 2002 is a particularly important date for the Mine Ban Convention, since it marks the third anniversary of its entry into force, in 1999.

I would today like to focus my statement on the universality of the Convention and participation in the Convention by member States of the Conference. Since I last addressed this Conference, shortly before the Third Meeting of States parties in Managua in September 2001, two member States of the Conference on Disarmament have ratified or acceded to the Convention, namely Algeria and Nigeria, and I would like here to congratulate them accordingly. In all, 37 member States of the Conference on Disarmament are now States parties to the Convention; five members have signed but not yet ratified; and 24 members have not yet acceded to the Convention.

I note encouraging signs of universalization, however. During the intersessional week in January 2002 in Geneva, representatives of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo informed us that all the necessary steps had been taken for ratification or accession in the near future. In October 2001, in the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia co-sponsored the resolution on anti-personnel mines and thereby sent a clear signal that it was considering early accession to the Convention. I also deem very encouraging the positive votes on that resolution by such signatory countries as Ethiopia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Poland and Ukraine and by countries which have not yet acceded to the Convention, such as Belarus, Finland, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

To date, 122 States have become parties to the Convention and 142 have either signed it, ratified it or acceded to it. It is clear that we now have at our disposal an international norm on the total prohibition of the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Since the treaty entered into force, the trade in anti-personnel mines has virtually stopped and production has significantly declined. Although there are still 14 producers worldwide, this is 41 fewer than there were on 1 March 1999.

Universality of the Convention and its full implementation are our fundamental objectives and, in this context, I encourage those 51 States which have not signed the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible and I call upon all States to stop using or producing anti-personnel mines, given their disastrous effects in humanitarian and development terms.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Westdal.

Mr. WESTDAL (Canada): Mr. President, I begin with congratulations to you on your current presidency. We are delighted to see you in the chair, and we will help you all we can. I welcome as well Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala. His constant commitment is a pillar of our perseverance and our hope. And I express as well, Mr. President, Canadian respect, gratitude and best wishes for his future to our Secretary-General, Vladimir Petrovsky. He can be rightly proud of a rich career of leadership and achievement.

As has been observed, Mr. President, tomorrow, 1 March 2002, is the third anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I speak now to salute that vital framework for international collaboration against the scourge of landmines.

The success of the Convention in its first three years is heartening. In all, 142 countries have signed or acceded to it. Of these 122 have ratified and others are preparing to do so. For two of our members, Chile and Nigeria, the Ottawa Convention enters into force tomorrow, on the Convention's anniversary, like gifts on a birthday. They are most welcome.

The Convention and its growing number of ratifications have made a real difference. As documented in the Landmine Monitor, the official report of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, there has been a dramatic drop in the number of States which produce and in the overall production of anti-personnel mines, a major decline in the use of these weapons and an almost complete halt to the international trade of anti-personnel mines.

That Landmine Monitor also records that more than 27 million mines have been destroyed in more than 50 countries, and that through concerted international efforts to clear mined land, mine-affected communities in every region of the world are regaining their freedom from fear. Land is safe again for children to play on, for families to farm and for communities to rebuild. While individuals are still hurt and killed by landmines, casualty rates are dropping dramatically in some of the world's most mine-affected countries. In Cambodia, for example, there were one third as many new mine victims in 1999 as there had been in 1996 and the total dropped by another 20 per cent in 2000. The news has been comparably good in States like Bosnia and Mozambique. And real progress is clear in our work for more and better assistance to landmine victims - a daunting task given that most landmine victims live in some of the world's poorest countries.

These achievements reflect the active commitment that the Convention has evoked in States around the world and in a vast range of non-governmental organizations. Developed and developing countries, mine-affected and mine-free, all participate and contribute, together with civil society, in a shared spirit of mutual respect. Canada has disbursed about $78 million to support mine clearance, victim assistance, mine awareness and other initiatives in more than 25 countries in every mine-affected region of the world. Many other countries, including many members of the Conference on Disarmament, have made great contributions to this campaign.

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

Yet we should not be too self-congratulatory; our campaign to rid the world of landmines is far from complete. And it is far from easy. Half the countries in the world are infested with landmines. According to Handicap International, the year 2000 saw victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance in at least 77 countries. To cite one example where urgent research is required, we have seen few if any reductions in mine-removal costs (which, of course, far exceed the costs of the mines' production). Simply put, without continuing commitment, the battle against mines will not be won.

Fortunately, our shared commitment seems robust. Intersessional meetings here in Geneva in late January assembled some 300 delegates from States parties as well as from States not yet party to the Convention, along with more than 150 representatives of international and non-governmental organizations. They all worked together to improve aid to victims, mine-clearance, civilian warnings, stockpile reductions and the general operations of the Convention. That work will continue at the next intersessional meetings in May and at the Fourth Meeting of States parties here in September. By that time, we are confident the number of the Convention's States parties will have increased still further.

Mr. President, the Ottawa Convention has proved the value of results-based multilateral diplomacy. It has saved lives, averted miseries, eased pain and suffering and inspired hope and progress around the world. That is not bad for a three-year-old. We wish it a happy birthday, universality, full implementation - and many happy returns.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. SUGONDHABHIROM (Thailand): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me the opportunity to address this Conference. As this is in fact the first time that Thailand has spoken during your presidency, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of this high office and to express our satisfaction with the way you have ably conducted the Conference.

May I also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for all that he has done for us and to wish him all the best.

I have asked for the floor today to join Canada, Norway and other speakers before me in reiterating the importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Production, Stockpiling and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, or the Ottawa Convention, on the third anniversary of its entry into force. Since 1999, States parties to the Convention and other partners in the Ottawa process have been successful in creating a new international norm against the use of anti-personnel landmines. The Ottawa Convention has provided a legal framework in which we can work together on mine victim assistance, mine-clearance, stockpile destruction, mine action technology, mine awareness education, and humanitarian, technical and financial assistance for mine-affected developing countries. The Ottawa process has created a strong community of States and civil society organizations willing to cooperate with one another for a good cause. Thailand is proud to be part of that community.

(Mr. Sugondhabhirom, Thailand)

As one of the States parties to the Convention, Thailand remains fully committed to the goals of the Ottawa process and its obligations under the Convention. In this regard, we would like to urge States which have not yet joined the Ottawa Convention to consider joining and to take part in this noble endeavour to make our world safe from anti-personnel mines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Thailand for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

Distinguished colleagues, as you are aware, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, completes today his term of office and retires. For nine years of his tenure, Mr. Petrovsky has also been closely linked with the Conference on Disarmament as its Secretary-General and the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In this capacity, he has discharged his duties with perseverance and authority. Indeed, the Conference on Disarmament has benefited greatly from his experience earned during his long-lasting career as an eminent diplomat of his country and then as a high-ranking official of the United Nations, as well as from his extensive knowledge of the intricacies of arms limitation and disarmament. His persistent efforts in strengthening the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating body of the international community and in encouraging it to respond to new challenges with determination and with commensurate imagination have earned him the respect of us all. On behalf of the Conference on Disarmament, and on my own behalf, I should like to wish Mr. Petrovsky and his family much success and happiness in the future.

It is my privilege to give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): Mr. President, first of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the kind words addressed to me by you and by the delegates who spoke before you. It strikes me as highly symbolic that the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the celebration of the third anniversary of the Ottawa Convention, one of the most important documents produced in the course of 2001, is taking place on my last day of service at the United Nations. Indeed, most of my time during my 45 years of service in diplomacy has been devoted to the promotion of arms limitation and disarmament, not only in words, but - what is more important - in practical deeds.

As has already been mentioned, for the last nine years I have been Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, in whose creation I took part as a Soviet delegate to the General Assembly's first special session on disarmament, in 1978. I have always considered multilateral negotiations, in particular in disarmament, a challenging and uplifting responsibility for those involved in multilateral diplomacy. Today, in a new emerging global society, we can, more than ever before, contribute to the creation of a more secure world.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Multilateral negotiations, which started 70 years ago here in Geneva, have proved that multilateralism, when handled with high professionalism and when based on political will, can bring tangible results. Indeed the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors have forged the most important arms regulations and disarmament regimes in the process of multilateral negotiations.

I am very proud that, during my term, the Conference on Disarmament successfully finalized the Chemical Weapons Convention and commenced, in 1994, negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, concluding it promptly in 1996. The successful conclusion of CTBT in 1996 - after more than 30 years of studies, deliberations and finally negotiations - was a landmark achievement. The Treaty has enhanced security in the world. Its unique and complex verification provisions are both complete and effective. In a broader sense, this mechanism is an example of a legal deterrence to those who do not fulfil their treaty obligations. It is my belief that legal deterrence will be one of the major approaches dealing with arms regulation and disarmament in the future.

In the post-11 September situation the importance of CTBT has become much more prominent. The new strategic environment reinforces the need for States and international bodies to take every possible measure, consistent with the rule of law and with the human values, to assure the safety of citizens and the security of nations. Seen from this standpoint, CTBT is a pillar of the new global security architecture. CTBT is based on and provides strength to the same partnerships and coalitions that are now so essential for fighting terrorism. It is rules-based and contains clear terms for compliance, implementation and verification. It also underscores the principle of preventive action - the greatest assurance of security that we can have now and in the future.

The conclusion of CTBT and CWC has raised the expectations of the international community to an unprecedented level. That is why the slowdown or, as some perceive it, the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmanent - although such a situation has arisen in the past - has provoked a legitimate wave of concern around the world. What has gone wrong? What are the possible remedies? Such questions have been asked before, and are now being asked with increasing emphasis and urgency.

A number of diagnoses have already been offered in this regard. In my opinion, the problem is not the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, its rules of procedure or its decision-making process. Of course, there is always room for improvement in all these areas. The problem, however, is much more complicated and can be attributed to a fundamental divergence of views on disarmament priorities after the end of the cold war. One can also argue that these priorities, relatively stable before, are now undergoing constant changes. One of the driving forces behind this phenomenon is the evolution of a new perception of security, especially in the aftermath of 11 September.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Does this mean that nothing is happening in the Conference on Disarmament? I could not agree with such an assessment. Year after year, even before the start of an annual session, both the current and incoming presidents conduct intensive consultations to strike a balance between different priorities; in other words, they are engaged in preparing the ground for an agreement on a so-called programme of work. In the last few years such an agreement has eluded the Conference, despite endless efforts by the successive presidents and the presentation by them, as well as by a number of States or groups of States, of numerous carefully drafted proposals. You remember that, in 2000, these efforts culminated in a proposal, submitted by Ambassador Amorim of Brazil during his presidency, which has been unanimously regarded as a basis for further consultations on the Conference's programme of work.

In addition, early last year, another breakthrough was made. For the first time in the history of the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors, there is no opposition to the establishing of a subsidiary body - an ad hoc committee - to deal with nuclear disarmament to exchange information and views on practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to attain this objective.

Notwithstanding these developments, the main problem facing the Conference, namely, how to start substantive work on a set of issues regarded as priorities by its member States, persists.

In my opinion, the controversies surrounding the outstanding issues remind us, regrettably, of the mentality of the cold war, when all problems were tightly linked and an "all or nothing" rule often guided the negotiations. In the new political situation, which requires recognition of the necessity of solving international issues through multilateral efforts, a new approach is needed, namely, a comprehensive and balanced approach to all priority issues.

I am also convinced that a new tactic should be applied in dealing with these issues. It is important to avoid a situation where progress in one area is made contingent upon progress in another. The relics of the cold war mentality and tactic of linkages should be replaced by constructive parallelism with regard to all priorities on the disarmament agenda. The potential advantage of this approach is that progress in one area can stimulate progress in another. At some point it may be possible to identify whether any of the issues under negotiation are ripe for conclusion in the form of an international legal instrument. We must not forget that treaty-making is the highest and final stage of negotiations, and one that goes beyond mere negotiation. What is required at this stage is the display by all members of the Conference of a spirit of compromise and cooperation which would allow the taking into consideration of the concerns of all.

It is tremendously important that the Conference today includes all militarily significant countries. The Conference also provides ample opportunity not only for multilateral talks but also for bilateral talks and talks among the top disarmament experts representing member States and observers.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Thus, it is not for lack of machinery that we still have so far to go along the path of disarmament. What we are missing is the will to use that machinery. Figuratively speaking, the international community here in Geneva has a road map for disarmament endeavours, with its own highway code and highly skilled drivers: top flight experts, who need no telling how or when to change gear. What we need, in order to move ahead, is for political leaders to unblock the road for the movement in parallel and in all directions towards arms regulation and disarmament.

I believe that, if the necessary political will is to be mobilized, the Conference on Disarmament must be more open to civil society, which plays a proactive role in all disarmament directions. Civil society should be given more opportunities to participate actively and responsibly in our deliberations. Of course, it is true that the rules of procedure of the Conference are not very favourable in this regard, but the search for a solution should be pursued intensively.

In this context, I cannot but highly appreciate the active interaction of UNIDIR, under the able guidance of its Director, Dr. Patricia Lewis, with the Conference on Disarmament, as well as its role in generating political support among civil society for all types of disarmament measures.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my warm and genuine appreciation to my colleagues here. I have immensely enjoyed your comradeship and hospitality and I have learned a great deal from your experience. I value greatly the friendships I have formed during my term in office, and during my whole diplomatic career. I am also very glad to have with us today Under-Secretary-General Mr. Dhanapala, with whom I have worked at different crossroads in the process of disarmament negotiations. Here too, I must stress how highly I value the extraordinary energy and commitment of my Deputy, Mr. Román-Morey, and my colleagues in the secretariat, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and Mr. Vladimir Bogomolov, who are professionals in the best sense of this term. In addition, the technical support that we receive from our general staff also represents a tremendous contribution to creating a favourable atmosphere for the work of the Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to express my strong belief that all of us who put faith in multilateral cooperation, in international institutions, global norms and a legal framework, who believe in the power of enlightened self-interest, will be able to mobilize the political will to use our machinery and its top expertise. The sooner this happens the better.

What is needed today is action, action, and more action.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to Ambassador Skotnikov, speaking on behalf of the Eastern European Group.

Mr. SKOTNIKOV (Eastern European Group) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to assure you of our full support. We are delighted today to have with us Mr. Dhanapala and particularly pleased also to see Mr. Petrovsky. I have asked for the floor in order, on behalf of the delegations of the Eastern European Group, to thank Vladimir Petrovsky for the fruitful cooperation that we have enjoyed with him over the many years of his successful service as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

As a career diplomat, Mr. Petrovsky devoted 45 years of his life to service in his chosen profession, nine of which he spent at the helm of the Geneva Office of the United Nations. Under his direct stewardship and with his active participation the work of the Office took on new dimension and dynamism.

Mr. Petrovsky is an eminent specialist in international relations and disarmament. As Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to this Conference, he made a significant contribution to major successes scored by this unique multilateral negotiating forum. One specific example, and an achievement which we all share, was the elaboration in 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The personal involvement of Mr. Petrovsky in the activities of the Conference on Disarmament and his negotiating experience have helped the Conference sustain a dynamic dialogue and facilitated the search for compromise solutions to the most complex problems which we faced in the work of this forum.

In his work Mr. Petrovsky has been able to achieve a happy combination of professional service with scientific enquiry. As a professor, he is a full member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences and the Academy of Military Sciences and a member of the board of governors of the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies and he also cooperates with other Russian and foreign scientific institutions. He is the author of a number of substantial works on international diplomacy and international relations.

Speaking in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation, I would like to recall that Mr. Petrovsky dedicated about 35 years of his life to service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs first of the Soviet Union and then of Russia. He rose through the ranks to become First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. All those who worked with him in Moscow - and I personally was fortunate to have that privilege - well recall the energy with which Mr. Petrovsky tackled the work which was so dear to him. His knowledge and experience were always keenly sought after in the diplomatic circles of our country.

Vladimir Petrovich, may I wish you the best of health and happiness and further success in your many activities.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation, who spoke also on behalf of the Eastern European Group, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Ambassador Mora Godoy, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I have addressed the Conference under your leadership, I would like to convey to you our congratulations on your assumption of this distinguished office and to reassure you of our support and cooperation in your performance of your functions.

It is a great honour for me personally to take the floor at this stage to bid farewell to a dear friend, an outstanding colleague and a distinguished professor, Vladimir Petrovsky, and I say "personally", because it was in New York, at the very start of my own diplomatic career, that I first met him and experienced the benefit of his support, his friendship and his wise counsel, which were invaluable and enduring.

On behalf of the Group of 21, which it is my honour to coordinate this month, I wish to express our gratitude and our best wishes to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who is ending his functions as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Geneva. I may assure him that we, the member countries of this forum, have all benefited from the great experience and knowledge of disarmament affairs and arms control which Mr. Petrovsky gained over his long diplomatic career, first as an esteemed representative of his country and subsequently as a high official of the United Nations, the Organization which he has served with a professionalism, loyalty and impartiality which should be emulated by all its staff members.

He has always been available to provide timely guidance, wise words and practical assistance, so as to strengthen the role of this Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. His daily activities performed for the benefit of peace and international security and the achievements of his professional life merit our deepest respect and commend him to our friendship. On behalf of the Group of 21 may I reiterate our best wishes to Mr. Petrovsky and his family for their future happiness and success.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador Luck, who will speak on behalf of the Western Group.

Mr. LUCK (Australia): Mr. President, this is my first opportunity to congratulate you since you assumed the important role of leading our work and I do so. It is also good to see our friend and colleague, Mr. Dhanapala, here from New York. We welcome you very much in our presence once again.

Mr. President, I would like to join others in expressing the appreciation of all delegations in the Western Group for the contribution that Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky has made to this Conference over the past nine years.

(Mr. Luck, Australia)

Mr. Petrovsky has served as Secretary-General of the Conference, as others have noted, and as Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference since October 1993. During the same period he has also had a significant additional responsibility through his position as Director-General of the United Nations Office here in Geneva.

We have been very appreciative of Mr. Petrovsky's leadership of the Conference and the Conference secretariat, which has consistently and ably supported the work of Governments in the Conference and also our work on related arms control and disarmament negotiations here in Geneva. He has been very active and proactive in fostering efforts by the community of Governments and also of other players, non-governmental organizations, here in Geneva to try and advance our work. We have been very conscious of the encouragement and the very positive impetus that he has given to that process and also of his acknowledgement of the role of women and promotion of the role that some of our women colleagues might play in our work.

He has brought a perspective to our work which reflects his wealth of diplomatic experience, from his service both on behalf of his own country, of course, but also within the United Nations itself.

We thank him very much for his committed and constructive ideas, which have helped stimulate the work of this Conference. While much has been done and achieved under his stewardship, we have a sense that he would share a little of our disappointment that it has not been possible to achieve more in recent years.

Mr. President, we will be sad to see Mr. Petrovsky leave us and we wish him and his wife well in their future endeavours.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu.

Mr. HU (China): Mr. President, first of all allow me on behalf of my delegation to pay tribute to the distinguished Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Vladimir Petrovsky. I convey our heartfelt thanks to him for the significant contribution and the untiring efforts that he has made over the years to promote the process of international disarmament and arms control in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. During his term of office he has discharged his responsibilities in an outstanding manner. My delegation and I myself fully associate ourselves with the statements of praise addressed to Mr. Petrovsky by you, Mr. President, and by the representatives of various groups.

During his term of office a number of successes were scored by the Conference on Disarmament, such as the fashioning of the CWC and the negotiation and conclusion of the CTBT. These all benefited from the wealth of diplomatic experience and outstanding skills of

(Mr. Hu, China)

Mr. Petrovsky. Whenever the Conference on Disarmament has been confronted with difficulties and setbacks Mr. Petrovsky has always worked hard and in a positive spirit with all delegations to ensure that the Conference can commence its work as quickly as possible.

The Chinese delegation has enjoyed happy and fruitful cooperation with Mr. Petrovsky and the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament. It has been a great pleasure for me personally and for my delegation to have the opportunity to work with Mr. Petrovsky. During both my terms of service in Geneva I have been fortunate enough to have had excellent cooperation with Mr. Petrovsky and have benefited from his assistance and advice. His departure will leave us with a rich store of excellent memories. Speaking on my own behalf and on that of my delegation, I would like to convey our sincere regret at his departure. Finally, I convey our heartfelt wishes to Mr. Petrovsky and his family for their health, happiness and success in the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see none. I now wish to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, who will speak on behalf of the Conference secretariat.

Mr. ROMAN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): On behalf of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, I should like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, for the outstanding accomplishment of his functions as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and for the invaluable guidance and professional assistance that he has rendered so generously to the secretariat of the Conference.

During his term of office, Mr. Petrovsky has always shared with us his outstanding diplomatic experience and his vast knowledge on arms limitation and disarmament. His creative vision of the evolution of international security has assisted the secretariat in providing the Conference with professional services and with sound and impartial advice. We will miss him as a professional team leader as well as a distinguished colleague. On my own behalf, let me stress to Mr. Petrovsky that it has been an honour to share with him common efforts in the field of arms control and disarmament.

It only remains for me to convey to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament our best wishes for happiness, good health and still more success in his new life.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference for his statement.

Distinguished colleagues, as I indicated at the beginning of our plenary meeting this morning, I should now like to proceed to the question of the appointment of special coordinators to fill the posts established in decision CD/1667, taken by the Conference on 14 February 2002.

I am happy to report that significant progress has been made. The consultations that I have undertaken in this regard have resulted in the following allocations of responsibility.

(The President)

For the duration of the 2002 session of the Conference, the Western Group will handle the review of the agenda of the Conference. The Group has designated Ambassador Chung of the Republic of Korea as special coordinator.

The Group of 21 will handle the question of improved and effective functioning of the Conference. The Group has designated Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka as special coordinator.

The Eastern European Group will handle expansion of the membership of the Conference. Consultations within the Group are continuing with a view to the designation of the special coordinator.

In those circumstances, I propose that we defer a formal decision until our next plenary meeting.

Extensive consultations are continuing on the programme of work.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 7 March 2002, at 10 a.m. Since this will be the eve of International Women's Day, the Conference will, in accordance with previous practice, receive a message from the various women's non-governmental organizations active in the field of disarmament.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.